



U.S. Department of Justice  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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## KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, MAN SENTENCED IN COUNTERFEIT CHECK SCHEME

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **William Cunningham**, 29, Kansas City, Missouri, was sentenced on January 5, 2004, by U.S. District Judge G. Thomas VanBebber to **57 months in federal prison, without parole, to be followed by two years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$5,550.50 in restitution to the Bank of Blue Valley, Olathe, Kansas.**

Melgren said that **Cunningham**, along with **Derek Mayfield**, 32, Kansas City, Missouri, **Joseph Flowers**, 29, Kansas City, Kansas, **Vernell Murphy**, 54, Kansas City, Missouri, **Michael Clemmons**, 31, Kansas City, Missouri, and **Yixin Zhu**, 42, Kansas City, Missouri, each entered guilty pleas on September 23, 2003. **James Hughes**, 23, Kansas City, Missouri, entered a guilty plea on October 1, 2003.

Melgren stated that this was an eight month investigation by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, the Overland Park Police Department, and the Olathe Police Department, with the assistance of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service into a counterfeit check scheme that was operating in Kansas and Missouri that resulted in a loss of approximately \$500,000. The following police departments in Kansas and Missouri also assisted in this investigation: Prairie Village, Kansas City, Kansas, Shawnee, Topeka, Lawrence, Blue Springs, Gladstone, Grandview, Independence, Lee's Summit, North Kansas City, and Raytown.

Melgren said that **Cunningham** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Cunningham admitted at his plea that he printed a counterfeit check on his computer that he provided to Vernell Murphy and that on December 13, 2002, Murphy cashed the \$5,550.50 counterfeit check purportedly issued by Trac-Excel, a business in Overland Park, Kansas, at the Bank of Blue Valley, Olathe, Kansas.

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**Mayfield** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Mayfield admitted at his plea that he provided Michael Clemmons a \$2,155.00 counterfeit check purportedly issued by the Jewish Community Campus of Kansas City and that on November 27, 2002, Clemmons cashed the counterfeit check at Hillcrest Bank, Olathe, Kansas. Mayfield faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole. Mayfield is set for sentencing on January 26, 2004, at 3:00 p.m.

**Flowers** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting another in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Flowers admitted that on January 7, 2003, he drove another individual to the Columbian Bank & Trust Company in Topeka, Kansas, and waited in the car for her to cash a counterfeit check for \$5,000 that was purportedly issued by Columbian Title of Kansas City. Flowers faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole. Flowers is set for sentencing in January 12, 2004, at 3:00 p.m.

Melgren stated that **Murphy** was sentenced on December 15, 2003, to **three years probation and ordered to pay \$3,350.75 in restitution**. Murphy entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting in the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Murphy admitted at her plea that on November 29, 2002, she passed three counterfeit checks purportedly issued by Concannon Group of Companies, Inc., Kansas City, Kansas, at three different branches of the First National Bank of Kansas located in Overland Park and Fairway, Kansas.

**Clemmons** entered a guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to possess and pass counterfeit checks. Clemmons admitted at his plea that on November 27, 2002, he cashed a counterfeit check for \$2,155 purportedly issued by the Jewish Community Campus of Kansas City at the Hillcrest Bank, Olathe, Kansas. Clemmons faces a maximum of five years in federal prison without parole. Clemmons is set for sentencing on January 26, 2004, at 3:00 p.m.

**Yixin Zhu** was sentenced on December 15, 2003, to **three years probation and ordered to pay \$5,500 in restitution**. Zhu entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Zhu admitted at his plea that on December 7, 2002, he cashed a counterfeit check for \$5,500 purportedly issued by Alvamar at the Emprise Bank, Lawrence, Kansas.

**James Hughes** entered a guilty plea to one count of aiding and abetting the possession and passing of a counterfeit check. Hughes admitted at his plea that on November 26, 2002, he cashed a counterfeit check purportedly issued by the Kansas City Country Club at Missouri Bank & Trust, Prairie Village, Kansas. Hughes faces a maximum of ten years in federal prison, without parole, and is set for sentencing on January 12, 2004, at 3:00 p.m.

The charges against Joegina Davis were dismissed in federal court and she was prosecuted in Shawnee County District Court. An additional twenty people were charged in

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with passing counterfeit checks as part of this conspiracy.

Melgren commended the excellent work of all the law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Leon Patton in this prosecution.